



# CVA

## FIVE YEARS OF NAZI TEARS





crew has had members who have self-described as Green Anarchists, Marxists, AnComs, Bookchinists, and Leninists who have been able to work together effectively because we care more about community defense and Antifascism than we do about highfalutin political theory.

This October, Corvallis Antifa will turn five years old. While this pales in comparison to the decades-long tenures of some other Torch Network groups like CenTex-ARA and Rose City Antifa, we recognize that we have outlasted a lot of left-wing and Antifascist projects. We wanted to take a moment to reflect on some of the aspects of our organizing that have made it possible for us to stay around this long, and to share some of the lessons we have learned doing this type of work for new organizers. Before delving into our thoughts, it is important to contextualize who we are as an organization, and detail a little bit of our history.

For those who don't know, Corvallis is a small town of about 60,000 in Oregon, located between Eugene and Salem in the southern half of the Willamette Valley, just east of the coastal city of Newport. We live and work on the ancestral land of the Ampinefu, or Mary's River, Band of the Kalapuya tribe.

Corvallis is a reasonably liberal town, having voted 67% democrat in the most recent presidential election, with a significant history of progressive and leftist organization. Much of this organizing comes out of Oregon State University, one of the city's largest employers, accounting for about 20% of all jobs. Corvallis has historically had thriving, left-leaning punk, noise, and art scenes for a city of its size. These scenes significantly intersect with the community's student and leftist populations. The Willamette Valley has a long history of Anarchist political organizing, specifically in the cities of Eugene to our south and Portland to our north. Despite this, Corvallis is surrounded on all sides by mostly smaller right-wing communities that have been havens for white nationalist and militia activity for decades.

Corvallis is nearly 80% white with a small community of Mexican immigrants. The rest of the city's racial and ethnic diversity primarily comes from the University. Due to this, Benton County, which also includes the cities of Monroe, Philomath, Adair Village, and part of Albany, has some of the highest linguistic diversity in the state, with large Arabic, Korean, Chinese, and Thai communities.

Corvallis Antifa started in the summer of 2018 in response to a significant increase in overt neo-Nazi organizing in our city. Multiple members of the Oregon Aryans were living in town, and were frequently stickering and harassing college students and left wing events. The response from local leftist organizations was mixed and largely non-confrontational and ineffective. Even when the Nazis addresses and names became known, local libs and leftists were more interested in engaging the fash through the courts and cops than they were via direct action. We came together to form CVA out of a shared critique of this response. We were inspired by the work of Rose City Antifa, The Pacific Northwest Antifascist Workers Collective, and Eugene Antifa after watching them expose the Oregon Aryans network and organize effective street actions shutting down fascist mobilizations in Portland.

When we started, we didn't have much of a blueprint for what Antifascism looked like in practice. We had been to a few counterdemos in larger cities, and had read reportbacks on It's Going Down, but we had no real background in the field. We embraced the DIY punk ethic, and decided to figure it out as we went. It took us a long time to get connected with more established Antifascists in our region, so we didn't have much guidance as to what to do. We started out with low-risk activities like flyering and

never a reason to antagonize the cops, but make sure you think about the consequences (risk and reward) before you do so. Check your ego. It's not about you and your ideology, it's about keeping fascists out of our communities.

## **DON'T GLORIFY AND CENTRALIZE VIOLENCE.**

Sometimes at actions, we've seen people take the phrase "we go where they go" as their singular goal, and put themselves and others in dangerous situations because they didn't take into account the real world considerations of actually fighting fascists (e.g. numbers, cameras, exit routes, weapons, protective gear, etc). The notion that effective antifascism can only be achieved through repeatedly throwing yourself into violent situations in the streets is damaging to specific actions, and undermines the safety of yourself, your crew, and your community. When you get into fights, be sure to win them. Getting beat up because you wanted to be macho and cool doesn't help anyone and just emboldens fash. Pick fights when you have the means to win them, and use sneakier tactics when you don't.

## **DON'T BE LIMITED BY IDEOLOGY.**

Effective Antifascist organizing requires a unified front. Outright refusing to organize with Antifascists who have slightly different politics than yours isolates your communities and limits your potential as organizers. We cannot afford to be separated by relatively irrelevant differences when there is urgent work to be done. Our

danger. We have seen this happen time and again both online and IRL. Clout is the mind-killer. Avoid it at all costs.

## **LEARN FROM OTHERS BUT KNOW YOUR OWN CONTEXT.**

Other groups have lots of experience and knowledge, but what works in one city might not work in another. Adapt tactics that you think are worthwhile, but also recognize that something that is really successful elsewhere might not do as well in your community. Use the resources available to you, and always be looking for ways to expand your knowledge and skill sets. For us, we have realized that many of the tactics effective in urban centers aren't as effective in Corvallis.

## **REMEMBER YOUR CREW IS YOUR COMMUNITY.**

A lot of groups seem to have this idea that you don't have to like someone to organize with them. While this can be true, it is also worth recognizing that your crew are the people you rely on. You have to trust each other in ways that maybe don't come up in casual friendships, and you go through terrible shit together. It's important to prioritize supporting and listening to each other. After most of our meetings and work sessions, we almost always wind up spending an hour or two bullshitting, playing games, and just being together. Moments like these remind us why we do this work, and allow us to be more effective as an organization and as people in our community.

stickering, before gradually escalating our tactics. Through persistent pressure, and external legal consequences, the local Oregon Aryans members were forced to leave Corvallis, and their ilk haven't returned.

We eventually taught ourselves some OSINT techniques and began publishing dossiers on local and national fash. We gradually solidified relationships with crews in Portland, and with researchers around the country. However, as our focus slipped away from local organizing, we started losing members. During this time, we also had two instances where individuals were asked to leave the group due to abusive and shitty behavior. We were left with a significantly smaller and less active core of organizers, and had to rebuild the crew from the ground up. We recruited significantly, and became more active and engaged in regional organizing, specifically prioritizing working with comrades in Salem who had been hit hard by intense Fascist protests.

In 2020, we were invited to join the Torch Antifa Network. In a lot of ways, our organization had shaped ourselves in the image of Torch's crews, so this was a tremendous honor. Joining the network helped us codify many of our existing relationships, and opened up new opportunities for collaboration, education, and comradeship. We have become significantly more connected to national level organization since joining the network, and highly recommend it to up and coming AFA crews.

We feel that as an organization, we have been effective in our goals of community defense. We have successfully quashed almost all of the fascist organizing in Corvallis,

and have majorly contributed to regional, national, and international Antifascist projects. Despite this success, we are also incredibly fallible, and have made a lot of mistakes we have had to recover from. We are compiling the following list of Do's and Don'ts based on our experience as a crew and what we have seen from organizing with other organizations and individuals. We hope that these pieces of advice will help new Antifascists, and give more experienced ones something to consider.



# DON'TS

## **DON'T OVERWORK YOURSELF.**

Whether it's going to actions in rapid succession, overloading yourself with research, or generally exhausting yourself organizing, it can be easy to forget to take care of yourself and become overwhelmed. This is work that demands great amounts of physical and emotional time, effort, and energy. Not to mention, spending hours and hours delving into fascist spaces is never good for your mental health. Periods of rest and recovery are crucial to effective organizing, research, and militant actions.

## **DON'T MAKE IT ALL ABOUT YOU.**

Even when you're sure you're right, two-way communication with the people you're working with is essential to effective organizing. People come from different perspectives and different life experiences, and ultimately the tactics needed are the ones that will be effective and keep (especially the most vulnerable) folks safe. For example, a cis white person might feel comfortable antagonizing the cops, but doing so causes everyone in black bloc around them to also be a prioritized target, and we know that the cis white person is not going to experience the same consequences as a trans or non-white person when arrested. We're not going to say there's

## **PROMOTE URBAN-RURAL SOLIDARITY.**

The US is rife with political division between urban and rural communities. These tensions that are fueled by unfounded and harmful stereotypes, and genuine economic differences. Rural communities have marginalized populations that deserve to be defended just as much as those in the cities, and failing to recognize that undermines the goals of this movement. This is exceptionally true for those of us in the western United States, where population density is low and rural communities can be incredibly isolated from population centers. In our experience, many regional Antifascists ignore or deride rural organizing. This is actively ceding territory to the far-right. Ignoring small communities allows fascism to proliferate unchecked.

## **AVOID GRIFTERS, NARCISSISTS, AND WANNABE CELEBRITIES.**

Be extremely suspicious of anyone who aims to promote themselves in Antifascist circles and on the political left in general. People who attempt to use this movement for personal, social, and/or economic gain are not your friends. In Antifascist circles, like all other social groups, someone who situates themselves in a position of social power can use their clout to abuse and mislead others, especially folks who are younger or newer to the movement. Leftists are not immune to this phenomenon, and even if they don't mean harm, people who care more about being the biggest voice in the room than about actually addressing a situation tend to put people in

# **DO'S**

## **KEEP YOUR GOAL IN MIND.**

At its core, Antifascism is about serving our communities. We are often the first and last line of defense against white supremacy. In order to effectively engage in community defense in a way that builds real power, we must earn the trust of those we serve. Too often we've watched other organizations succumb to petty beefs, reckless impulse, and ultra-left infighting. These things only serve to alienate community members from the work we do. We cannot take this risk. We must act respectfully when organizing in our community. We must put real material needs over ideological pettiness and adventurist masturbation. This looks like engaging in tactics that get material results, providing accurate and accessible information to community members, and having a public means for community members to contact you. Our goal has always been community defense, and we cannot lose sight of it.

## **BUILD STRONG LOCAL AND REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS.**

Much has been made about the revolutionary potential (or lack thereof) of Antifascism. If there is any such potential, it is in the construction and maintenance of effective networks of militant solidarity. When we show up for each

other and build lasting bonds, we are exponentially more powerful than if we are a bunch of atomized individuals fighting without coordination and solidarity. Many Antifascists these days exist primarily on the internet as researchers, commentators, or shitposting propagandists. While there is legitimate utility in all of these things, they do not have the same revolutionary potential and long term impact as building real and lasting regional community. This movement is bigger than any of us. When individual antifascists get knocked out of the game, the broader community must carry on with the work.

## **RECOGNIZE THE HOLISTIC NATURE OF THE WORK.**

Revolutionary communities cannot solely be made through militant organization. Building local power takes way more than rowdy black bloc actions and doxes. It is important for anyone doing community defense work to collaborate with and bolster other forms of local organizing. These types of organizing are not confined to militance. Some of our most meaningful relationships have been with subcultural organizers and mutual aid groups. Both of these spaces have been explicitly targeted by fascists in Corvallis, and have been places where we have been able to collaborate and build stronger ties between different groups. Many members of CVA are also active within other community contexts, some explicitly political and some not. We have found that being active in different spaces allows us to do our work more effectively, and has deepened our ties to the broader community.

## **MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE CORE GROUP.**

It's great to have a lot of people involved, as the saying goes "many hands make light work." But it's only true if all those hands are, you know, actually doing the work. We've had members that needed to step back temporarily or permanently because they don't have the time, mental capacity, or motivation to be as actively involved - and that's okay. Check in with your crew, make sure people are okay, and remove inactive folks from the loop. It's good security culture and better for their mental health to not be constantly bombarded by asks that they will always turn down. You can always add them back in once they're in a place where they can be active and involved.

## **RESPECT AND ACKNOWLEDGE A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS.**

Not every strategy is equally effective in every context, and not everyone can or wants to utilize the same tactics as you. Being preoccupied with the idea that fascist organization can \*only\* be countered with militancy in the streets is dangerous to yourself, your crew, your community, and ignores the vast array of tactics at our disposal. Engage in good faith with other organizers of different persuasions. More often than not, we share the same goals and are stronger together.